

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 505

JC 840 177

AUTHOR Bazik, Martha S.
TITLE Non-Credit Education's Response to the Challenges of the 80's.
INSTITUTION Moraine Valley Community Coll., Palos Hills, IL.
Center for Community and Continuing Education.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *College Role; Community Colleges; *Community Services; Continuing Education; *Educational Needs; *Educational Trends; *Noncredit Courses; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Five of the major issues confronting postsecondary education today are the decline in the quality of education, the increase in competition from other education service providers for a share of the postsecondary market, the increase in the demand on education as a result of rapid changes in technology, the decline in educational revenues, and the decline in the pool of the traditional college-age population and the increase in new population groups needing to be educated. A strong non-credit division is essential if colleges and universities are to respond meaningfully to these challenges. This unit, which would complement the credit division, would have the capability of perceiving and responding to the diverse educational needs of new publics. To realize its capabilities, the non-credit unit should: (1) be placed on the same level as any other division in the administrative hierarchy; (2) adopt policies, procedures, and products in concert with the mission and goals of the institution; (3) be administered by personnel with good management, program development and implementation, communication, and marketing skills; (4) continually monitor the internal and external environment to assess needs, identify publics, and develop resources; (5) establish evaluation criteria for educational products; (6) establish performance criteria for all administrative personnel; (7) engage in strategic planning; (8) devise and implement marketing strategies; and (9) operate cost effectively. (LAL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Fred Gaskin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NON-CREDIT EDUCATION'S RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 80's

by

Martha S. Bazik, Ph.D.

The Center for Community & Continuing Education
Moraine Valley Community College
Palos Hills, Illinois

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

As higher education enters the decade of the 80's, we are being faced with unprecedented challenges. Today, as never before we are confronted with serious problems which should force us to rethink many aspects of our operations. Several issues will be enumerated below and briefly examined for the impact each has on the total structure of the system of higher education. Then the proposal will be made that a strong non-credit division is essential if colleges and universities are to respond meaningfully to the challenges of the 80's. This thesis will be argued with respect to its feasibility to address the issues identified.

For several decades the American system of higher education consistently provided a quality product. The majority of students graduating with baccalaureate degrees possessed a standard of education which took them well beyond the traditional high school diploma. Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics acquired in high school were further refined in colleges and universities with the end result being a fairly literate individual earning the B.A. or the B.S. Recently the quality of the product is being questioned. Lack of standards, mediocre students, lack of direction and vision are all suggested contributors to the decline in educational quality. These charges have been frequently reported in the pages of such publications as The Chronicle of Higher Education, many newspapers and professional journals. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, which undertook an extensive study of the educational system, made these accusations appear irrefutable when it published its recent report. A portion of the text reads:

"We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by the rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur--others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments." 1

The report continues to call for a reform of our educational system to include one with vision and disciplined effort:

ED243505

JC 846 177

"Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them. This report, the result of 18 months of study, seeks to generate reform of our educational system in fundamental ways and to renew the nation's commitment to schools and colleges of high quality throughout the length and breadth of our land." (p. 11).

Possibly the decline in quality of education has been one contributing factor to another concern which faces post-secondary institutions today. This challenge stems from unprecedented competition from other organizations and agencies which are producing educational services. Large corporations, business, professional associations, hospitals, and community organizations have entered the market taking a share which previously had been secured by institutions of higher education. The following excerpt from a recent Kellogg report captures both the essence and the magnitude of the problem, indicating that only a small portion of the post-secondary market belongs to colleges and universities.

"Today, about 12 million people attend colleges and universities in the U.S. However, another 46 million adults are being educated by another service provider. If one quarter of these 46 million adults are now being educated and decided to take their education programs at a college or university, there would be no decline in enrollments in higher education. However, the pressure for further education has basically gone around colleges and universities; we have now built a "second system" of post-secondary education in the U.S. whose total investment per year is about what is invested in colleges and universities put together--about \$50 billion." 2

The following quote from a recent issue of the Community & Junior College Journal reinforces the Kellogg report. It further indicates a sobering fact that colleges and universities no longer have a monopoly on post-secondary education.

"A tremendous shift is occurring in regard to who delivers education at the post-secondary level. Approximately \$60 billion per year is spent by business, industry and other agencies to educate employees in programs not connected to colleges or universities. Frequently, business and industries offer degrees through their own accredited programs. The colleges' and universities' monopoly of certification of credit hours for diplomas no longer exists." 3

In addition to increased competition from other educational service providers, colleges and universities are confronted with issues related to rapid technological changes. Contemporary technological advances are accompanied by a need to train and retrain people to master new skills for employability. Increased use of technologies also continues to make more leisure time available to people. The average work week has declined from 60 hours to 39 hours over the last century. Projecting into the future, Fred Best notes:

"The portion of the average male's life given to work has declined from about 67% in 1900 to about 60% in 1970. If current trends persist, Bureau of Labor Statistics Projections indicate that the portion of life given to work will decline to about 56% by 1990, leaving 44% of the average male's life spent on non-work activities, 10 years of which will be in the form of retirement."

Colleges and universities have to determine their role in relation to the educational issues generated by new technologies and outline strategies to deal with them. By not doing so, we will continue to experience a decline in the share of the post-secondary market which we now possess. In its report The Commission on Excellence in Education challenges post-secondary education to deal with the technology-related issue through the creation of a "Learning Society."

"In a world of ever-accelerating competition and change in the conditions of the workplace of ever-greater danger, and of ever-larger opportunities for those prepared to meet them, educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society. At the heart of such a society is the commitment to a set of values and to a system of education that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity, from early childhood through adulthood, learning more as the world itself changes. Such a society has as a basic foundation the idea that education is important not only because of what it contributes to one's career goals but also because of the value it adds to the general quality of one's life." (p. 12)

A fourth challenge which confronts us in the 80's is a significant decline in the traditional college-age population. The Kellogg report indicates that a conservative estimate would be a 24% decline in the 18-24 year old segment. In addition, the report further predicts that many in this age bracket will be unable or unwilling to consider college when they are 18 because of difficulties which arise as a result of single-parent families. The "baby boom" population is now in its forties resulting in an increase of 42% in the 35-44 year old group. While there is an echo to the "baby boom," it will not be felt by post-secondary institutions until about 2000.

Despite the fact that there has been a decline in the traditional caucasian college-age population, a similar decline has not been experienced among the minorities cohort. By 1990, minorities of all ages will constitute 20-25% of our total population. In some states it will be as high as 45%. To the pool of non-traditional college-age population also must be added the increasing numbers of those over 65. According to the Kellogg report projections, there will be 30 million in this age category by 1990. The Kellogg report further predicts that, "though they do not seek access to skills to increase their productivity, their educational needs are very real and important. Their numbers will be formidable in the political sense, and they vote in large numbers. Education may well become one of the major issues on their agenda." (p. 2). Colleges and universities geared to meet the educational needs of the predominantly white, traditional-aged student body are currently, and will increasingly be called upon, to service a new student population to which they have not become accustomed.

One final major concern is that of decline in revenues to support educational endeavors. In the June 1, 1983, issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, a byline read "Growth in State Funds for Colleges Expected to Slow Further." Larger schools have been forced to close entire departments or divisions for financial exigency while many small colleges are either in danger of extinction or have already become so. Old battle lines are being revived as state schools vie with private schools to retain students' rights to receive both state and federal financial aid. The federal government, in an attempt to force state government to provide more financial backing for schools, has imposed a serious burden on already financially strapped state budgets. States, in turn, pass the burden along.

In summary, five of the major issues which confront post-secondary education today are:

1. Decline in the quality of education.
2. Increase in competition from other educational service providers for a share of the post-secondary market.
3. Increase in the demand on education as a result of rapid changes in technology.
4. Decline in revenues available to finance education, and
5. Decline in the pool of the traditional college-age population and increase in new population groups needing to be educated.

The manner in which our institutions respond to these issues may well determine how well they will survive and flourish in the decade of the 80's and beyond.

Assuming that it is the desire of every post-secondary institution to survive and flourish, what measure might we take to facilitate this process? In the majority of post-secondary institutions, a fairly traditional academic menu is offered. One solution might be the restructuring of the credit unit. Currently classes meet for a fixed number of hours, days, and timeframes. Any changes must be approved internally by councils generated for that purpose, as well as externally by state-approval boards. Although these procedures are necessary for quality control, they do not render an institution responsive to the demands being made on it by new publics and contemporary technologies. It might be argued that these rules and regulations do not even insure that a high quality product results--judging from the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

One possible avenue which we could take to render post-secondary institutions both responsive and competitive would be total restructuring of the traditional academic unit. New approval systems and standards of quality would have to be developed to provide the flexibility needed to generate products which reflect the educational needs of new publics, as well as respond to continual changes in technology. In addition to the restructuring of the academic system, a reorientation of faculty and staff would be necessary. New mindsets would have to be developed to allow for new configuration of hours, locations, etc. for offering courses. The "ivory tower" environment would have to vanish and, in its place, a new one generated to integrate the world outside the institution and the world within. No longer could educational products be created in a vacuum but rather in an environment which provided continual feedback on how well we prepare people to function in a world of rapid change.

Anyone who has participated in the course or program-approval process will agree that while a total restructuring of the academic unit has some merit, it is not realistic to expect it to occur as academic institutions historically are slow to change. It is also unrealistic because the ramifications extend beyond the institution itself to the funding structure imposed by state governments. For public institutions funding is directly tied to credit hours. These are attached to a fixed number of courses and programs approved by state accrediting bodies. Private institutions are affected, as well, as state and federal scholarship monies are granted based on credit hours attached. Since these procedures are solidly entrenched, to change them would require visionary leadership as well as institutions and individuals who would lay aside vested interest for the common good.

The total restructuring of the academic unit is not practical or realistic. It is also not necessary if one considers an alternative method for providing institutions with the dynamic, responsive nature which is required to deal with the educational issues of the future. The credit division could remain intact

and evolve as it has done in the past. This would continue to meet the needs of the traditional college student, as well as those who value the baccalaureate degree as the route to knowledge and validation. The Kellogg research indicates that in the foreseeable future, there will continue to exist a pool of candidates for the traditional fare although this body of individuals is shrinking in size. The credit division would primarily be suited for the presentation of bodies of knowledge which remain fairly stable in content. Literature, history, mathematics, rhetoric, language, and music are some that come to mind. To make credit activities relevant they would have to be taught with increased emphasis upon critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis, tools which are transferable. In this manner, knowledge gained through credit activities would not be dated or obsolete. Hopefully, it would equip individuals to adjust as they are confronted by new conditions and knowledge resulting from increased use of contemporary technology.

In addition to the credit division, institutions need to create a non-credit division to exist separately, but coequally, with the credit one. This unit, which would complement the credit one, would have the capability of perceiving the diverse educational needs of new publics and responding continuously to them. While most institutions are engaged in non-credit programming of some kind, it is rare that such units enjoy the same status and prestige of the credit bearing division. Quite frequently the heads of such units report to an academic dean who does not understand, or respect, the nature of non-credit programming. As a result, growth and productivity are extremely difficult. Much of non-credit programming is initiated as a panacea or a "quick-fix" for the financial difficulties which beset some institutions. Heads of non-credit units are caused to operate on shoestring budgets. If by some miracle they generate revenues, these revenues are reallocated to the general operating fund and not reinvested to encourage further growth of the unit. New attitudes need to be developed towards the whole area of non-credit programming. As participants in the non-credit process, we need to realize the power of the tool for which we are responsible and view it as a force motivating institutional vitality. We need to convince our top administrators that the unit is essential to the wellbeing of our institutions and that considerable care and thought should be given to its development.

With this in mind, I offer the following model of a non-credit unit. A discussion of how such a unit would make our institutions responsive to educational issues of the 80's and beyond will be included.

Non-Credit Division Model

Definition - The non-credit division is that unit within the college which provides educational experiences with no traditional college credit attached.

Location in Administrative Hierarchy - The non-credit division is placed on the same level as any other division which provides educational experiences. It is not subordinate to the credit division, nor considered a department within that division. The head of the non-credit division enjoys the same status as the head of the credit division. Every effort should be made by the top administrator to project the idea that the non-credit unit provides educational experiences which are as valid as the credit unit.

Accountability - While the non-credit division is not to be subjected to the cumbersome approval process of the credit division, we cannot minimize the need to be accountable to the institution and its officers. The division exists within and is an integral part of the institution. Its policies, procedures, and products should be in concert with the mission and the goals of the institution. While the freedom from academic approval bodies is necessary, administrators of non-credit units must not abuse this freedom by comporting themselves in a manner which would embarrass the institution. All policies and procedures should be communicated to the officers of the institution and approved by them where necessary.

Personnel - The personnel of non-credit units must be selected with care and consideration. Frequently the leadership position is entrusted to an individual within the institution because he or she has served the institution well in another capacity. This may or may not work. Before any individual is entrusted with administrative positions within the non-credit division, careful consideration has to be given to the qualities necessary to perform the job. Good management, program development and implementation, communication and marketing skills are some of the measurable proficiencies which a candidate for non-credit administrative positions should possess. In addition, at least the head of the unit, and preferably all others within the unit, should have an entrepreneurial nature. They need to be flexible and creative, be highly visible outside the institution, have the ability to analyze and systemize, and generate products on the basis of this analysis. The number of personnel depends on the areas which have been identified for development. But whether the staff is small or large, each member should be selected with utmost care keeping the above criteria in mind.

Function of the Non-credit Unit - In order to be responsive to changing educational needs of diverse publics, the non-credit unit needs to:

1. Continually scan or monitor the internal and external environment, to assess needs, identify publics, resources and subject matter for educational activities. This function requires the utilization of formal research, as well as informal ways of acquiring information such as: reading books and journals, attending conferences, and talking to resource people.
2. Establish evaluation criteria for all educational products and continually assess all activities to determine if they are of high quality, relevant to needs, and cost effective. Based on these evaluations, products should be reshaped, discarded, or continued.
3. Establish performance criteria for all administrative personnel and continuously evaluate performances based upon these guidelines. Staff cannot be allowed to coast along, going through the same routine they have engaged in for years. Performance criteria must be established which encourage staff members to continuously seek out avenues of information about publics and the external and internal environment and translate this information into educational products.
4. Engage in strategic planning so that the unit is not allowed to drift aimlessly without well defined purposes. Strategic planning will make provisions for all other functions of the unit to insure that all of them are directed to the accomplishment of the overall goal or goals of the division.
5. Continuously devise and implement marketing strategies in order to insure a generous share of the post-secondary market. The traditional recruitment efforts of colleges and universities are not likely to attract the publics which non-credit activities are designed to serve. Initially, the marketing function of the non-credit division should not be entrusted to the Admissions Department.
6. Operate in a cost-effective manner with the ultimate goal being to become self-sustaining and revenue producing.

A non-credit unit so structured would be an asset to the institutional quest to remain vital in the future. Most definitely, it would assist the institution to provide quality products. While it cannot improve the quality of the credit classes, it can insure that the products it generates will conform to high standards. Unlike credit programs, non-credit activities do not have the promise of a degree to entice people to register for classes because they are a requirement of the degree. People buy non-credit programming based upon the value of a single educational activity to them. If it doesn't measure up to their expectations, they do not need to continue to buy additional products because they need to fulfill the requirements of a degree. For example, a workshop in the area of continuing education for health professionals will be judged on the basis of whether it provides the participant with the additional knowledge necessary to do his/her job or not. If that individual returns for another workshop or recommends it to others, it will be on the basis of the quality of the product. A similar argument could be made for all other areas of non-credit programming. The non-credit unit cannot afford to put inferior products on the market. The competition for the post-secondary market is too keen to assume that the individuals are going to buy them. They do not have to do so. They have a large variety of educational service providers from which to choose.

While the quality criteria which exists today relates primarily to the ability of an institution to meet the educational needs of the credit-seeking student, as new target populations and educational needs emerge, standards of quality will also be generated which judge educational services by their ability to meet the needs of these new collegiate populations. By meeting these standards of quality, the non-credit unit will enhance the overall image of the institution.

The second issue of increased competition for the post-secondary market by other educational service providers would also be addressed by the existence of a non-credit division. Most educational service providers have the capability to zero in rapidly on educational needs as they arise. For obvious reasons, the credit unit does not. The fare which is being offered by other educational service providers can easily be duplicated by the non-credit division.

As the Kellogg report indicates, there is a larger group of individuals who are engaged in post-secondary education outside of the traditional institutions of higher learning. This group grew up around the traditional bodies because they were not providing educational experiences to meet the needs of this body of people. In the past, most colleges and universities did not have to concern themselves with student shortages. But during the last decade, many institutions lowered standards in order to generate a large enough student body to keep institutions financially solvent. Now many institutions of higher education have to seriously consider that large group of individuals engaged in non-traditional post-secondary education as potential students and plan strategies to attract them. It is not sufficient to promote solely the traditional academic fare to this group. They have rejected it in the past.

The non-credit division would be able to operate much in the same fashion as the competition. It would be able to create and discard courses as the need arises. Not tied to rigid course requirements, it could provide flexible formatting. It could start activities at any time during the academic year, condense materials into shorter time frames, offering educational products at non-traditional times and in non-traditional places. Not restricted by course or degree requirements, the participants in non-credit activities would not have to be bothered by list-taking, paper writing, etc. In addition, not restricted by creditating procedures, the division could use excellent individuals who have the knowledge and appeal but not the masters or the Ph.D.

The third issue, the increased demand for educational services resulting from new technologies, is one that the non-credit division is ideally suited to address if the personnel of the division described in the model continuously monitors the environment external to the institution. Information is taken about new knowledge generated by contemporary technologies. This information is then translated into educational activities which will assist people in remaining current in job skills. The flexibility and rapidity with which the division can focus upon these areas and translate them into products is essential in light of the fact that what is current today may not be tomorrow. Flexibility is especially important in regard to formatting of activities. The traditional semester or quarter terms are not particularly effective formats when the issue is acquisition of bodies of knowledge which are rapidly changing. Individuals may need to have an entire semester-worth of knowledge at the end of one week. The non-credit division can respond to this demand. The credit one would have a great deal of difficulty doing so. The non-credit division can also rapidly act upon specific requests for customized training programs. Business, industry, health services, and education are increasingly relying on outside agencies to design programs tailored to their needs. While these requests are reasonable, and could be a very lucrative enterprise for the institution, they are frequently looked upon as an unwelcome intrusion and ignored by the credit division. That is understandable. There is no mechanism by which that division can respond.

The same argument can be made for the need to produce educational activities to help people better use leisure time. The continuing education unit can offer a variety of activities which would appeal to a wide range of tastes. These products can be continuously refined and updated as new trends appear.

The issue which deals with decreasing revenue is a more complex and difficult one with which to deal. The non-credit division cannot be viewed as a panacea for the financial ills of an institution. Yet, the expectations that it can eventually provide the

institution with some additional revenue is not unrealistic. During the first few years money may have to be invested in the division to subsidize the operation. With entrepreneurial leadership, good management and marketing techniques, the division can produce a profit.

As the Kellogg report indicates above, \$50 billion a year is invested in the system of post-secondary education which has grown up outside of colleges and universities. It is a big business which currently provides generous returns for the education service-providers who engage in it. There is no reason to doubt that the non-credit unit of colleges and universities can enjoy the same returns if the right personnel are chosen to lead the unit and it is undergirded by full institutional support and commitment.

Finally, the challenge of appealing to new publics is one for which the non-credit unit is ideally suited. The offering of the credit unit is usually differentiated around specific disciplines only. The non-credit division can offer activities which are general in nature or those which appeal to certain age groups, certain professions, one sex or the other, and certain minorities. In addition, programs can be generated to meet special needs of special groups. Because of the flexibility of the unit, the combinations of publics served is limited only to the imagination and creativity of division personnel. The unit's ability to monitor the external environment will generate the information needed to serve the emerging populations who will be buying educational products.

As non-credit educators, we must believe in the importance of our activities to our institutions. Often we are relegated to "back burner" status; therefore, we are not aware of how vital we are to its survival.

We must do our homework, so that armed with facts and figures, we can convince its officers that we can and do make a difference in the life of the institution.

NOTES

- 1 A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, Report of the National Commission on Excellence as reproduced in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. XXVI, No. 10, May 4, 1983, p. 11.
- 2 "Guess Who's Coming to College: Your Student in 1990," Innovation Abstracts, Vol. V, No. 12, p. 2.
- 3 "Future Outlook: World Class Colleges Coming," Community and Junior College Journal, Vol. 53, No. 7, April 1983, p. 58.
- 4 "Work and Leisure in the Future," Through the 80's: Thinking Globally Acting Locally, World Future Society (Washington, D.C.) 1980, p. 255.

ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

JUN 15 1984

8118 Math-Sciences Building
Los Angeles, California 90024